



A WaterZoo guide to...

# Moving your aquarium

Moving an established aquarium and its contents can be daunting and time consuming task, even for the experienced fish keeper. Provided the procedure can be completed within a day and is well thought out, there is no reason for it not to be successful. If you are unable to complete the move within a day The WaterZoo offers a fish boarding service. Moving an aquarium and its livestock will involve an element of risk. Following this guide will help minimise this risk.

Livestock should not be fed for at least twenty-four hours prior to being moved. This will minimise contamination of the water while the fish are in transit.

Before you attempt to move any aquarium it must be emptied of all water, decoration, and gravel. Moving an aquarium containing water or substrate would not only be extremely heavy, there is a risk of damage to the aquarium. At least fifty percent, more if possible, of the water should be siphoned off and placed into food grade plastic containers; this will be used to re-establish the aquarium once it reaches its destination. Remember to switch off all electrical equipment at least thirty minutes before starting this process, to allow the heater to cool. Then remove any decoration and plants; this will make catching the fish much easier, pack the fish and plants as detailed in the next paragraph. Now the substrate and equipment can be removed. Do not clean the filter or substrate in tap water this will kill almost all the vital bacteria that are necessary for maintaining water quality. If you must clean these, do so in waste aquarium water. Ideally the biological media should be removed from the filter and packed in a similar method to the livestock.

Fish should be packed in watertight polythene bags taking care to pack large or spiny fish, like catfish separately from others. Marine fish and invertebrates should be packed individually, live rock can be packed moist in buckets or polystyrene boxes. The longer the transit time the lower the packing density should be. Live plants can be packed moist in a polythene bag with a small amount of water. Where necessary livestock should be double bagged to ensure they do not puncture the bag. The bags should be filled with approximately thirty percent water and seventy percent air, and fastened with rubber bands or nylon tie wraps. The addition of Stress Coat to the bags will help netted fish regenerate their protective mucous. Once the fish are packed they should be placed in a dark insulated container, a cool box or polystyrene fish box is ideal. Do not open this box until you reach your destination, as this will distress the fish, and lose valuable heat. Do not leave the box in direct sunlight and avoid any extremes of temperature.

On arrival the aquarium should be set up as soon as possible, using the water removed earlier. Be sure the aquarium is placed on a flat level surface away from extremes of temperature and direct sunlight. A WaterZoo guide to positioning your aquarium covers this topic in more detail. Top this up using new water with the addition of a water conditioner or Stress Coat. Once full switch on all the equipment and wait for the water to come up to temperature. Once the temperature is correct acclimatise the livestock in the normal way, before releasing them.

A WaterZoo guide to acclimatising fish to your aquarium covers this topic in more detail.

Leave the lights off during this procedure and for the rest of the day. Add a bacterial starter product e.g. Seachem Stability or Tetra Safestart, this will give the filter a boost and help ensure optimum water quality.

Do not feed the fish for a further twenty-four hours, after this time the fish may be fed lightly. Keep a close eye on the water quality, especially ammonia and nitrite for a further ten days and take remedial action if necessary. After this time your aquarium should be well on the way to re-establishing itself.

## **Checklist of items needed for moving an aquarium**

- Net.
- Fish bags.
- Insulated box(s) / cool box.
- Water containers able to hold at least 50% of the aquarium volume. These can be hired from The WaterZoo if required.
- Stress Coat or water conditioner.
- Bacterial starter e.g. Seachem Stability or Tetra Safestart.
- Ammonia & nitrite test kit.

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Jason Scott, a regular contributor to Practical Fishkeeping magazine, who has over 25 years experience in the hobby, wrote this WaterZoo guide and others in the series.